Boeing Selects Airlines to Test Airplane Health Management Service

Boeing [NYSE: BA] has selected two airlines to participate in the development of an airplane monitoring system designed to reduce flight delays, cancellations, air turn-backs and diversions.

Air France and American Airlines will test the new data-monitoring and prognostic service, called Airplane Health Management (AHM), during the next year to ensure its availability to airlines in first-quarter 2004. Boeing will name a third airline from the Asia-Pacific region to the development program soon.

AHM monitors the health of an airplane in flight and relays that information in real time from the air to the ground. When the airplane arrives at the gate, maintenance crews are ready to make any needed repairs quickly. AHM is designed to help operators reduce the number and length of airplane dispatch delays and convert certain tasks from non-routine to scheduled maintenance. In addition, AHM will support long-term fleet reliability programs by helping airlines identify recurring faults and trends.

"AHM leverages Boeing's vast technological resources and airplane knowledge to provide substantial value to our airline customers," said Lou Mancini, Boeing Commercial Aviation Services vice president of Maintenance Services. "It will increase airlines' operational efficiency and reduce their costs."

Boeing selected Air France and American Airlines as development partners based on the intellectual equity that they bring to the development process. Factors included geographic location, fleet size and a willingness to be involved in the development process.

"These airlines bring 'real life' to our product development efforts," said Mancini. "Their input will be invaluable as we test our AHM service and strive to make it the best it can be for our airline customers."

The development partners already have helped define the "look and feel" of the AHM tool and during the next year will help refine the exact functionality of the service.

Boeing will offer the AHM service in three releases. The first release, Release 1.0, will involve the reporting of fault data from the airplane central maintenance computer. Release 2.0 will use "snapshots" of systems in operation from the airplane condition monitoring system. Release 3.0, due out in late 2005, will use a continuous stream of data taken during the entire flight.

AHM is part of a growing family of information technology offerings from Boeing Commercial Aviation Services. Other Boeing Enterprise One products include a maintenance management software system specifically tailored to the air transport industry; a software module called Allowable Configuration Manager that centralizes configuration management via a Web-browser-based illustrated parts catalog and provisioning files; and an expanding document management system that currently includes Boeing Portable Maintenance Aid and Boeing Digital Technical Documents.

Air France is a major global airline with service to more than 238 cities in 91 countries. It constantly strives to lower maintenance costs, not only for its own fleet but for those of its customers. Air France has identified "on condition" maintenance as an area to achieve some of these lower costs, which can be applied to latest-generation airplanes. It is committed to the concept of a maintenance support application that gathers and centralizes all the data needed to anticipate technical events, which will enable the airline to substantially improve the responsiveness of its maintenance teams.

American Airlines is the world's largest carrier. American, in concert with American Eagle and the AmericanConnection regional carriers, make up the American Airlines' network. Together they serve more than 250 cities in 41 countries and territories with approximately 4,400 flights. The combined network fleet numbers more than 1,100 aircraft.

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